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ABSTRACT

Community development can be defined as a public-group approach, dedicated to achieving the goals of the total body politic. The public service function of the land grant colleges and universities is specifically designed to advance their respective states socially, economically and culturally and these institutions must serve as viable resources to the people who support them. There are some perils of a university involvement in community service; these include: (1) the difficulty in identifying the decisionmakers in the public sector and ascertaining who is responsible for change or the lack of it; (2) the frequent hostility among groups concerned with the same problem; (3) the acutal problem of decisionmaking, i.e. the listing of goals, the alternatives, and means of achieving them; and (4) the problem of discouraging what seem to be unwise moves on the part of the community, and encouraging the implementation of the decisions reached as a result of university research. The university should state the facts as it knows them, admitting possible error, and encourage the appropriate people to make a decision. (AF)

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THE UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

(An address given at Council on Extension of The National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, Empire Room, Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D. C. 8:30 A.M., Tuesday, November 10, 1970.)

JOHN C. WEAVER

I won't get far down the road this morning before you will be able to perceive, even through the blur of this early hour, that I am no expert in the field of community development. My good friend and colleague Brice Ratchford somehow engineered our confrontation, and while I can't ask you to hold him responsible for my basic incompetence, he will have to assume the blame for your being subjected to my pontification -- pontification which will almost inevitably be laid before you with all of the stout authority of the completely ignorant.

I should, indeed, frankly confess that I sense some unnerving similarities between my present situation at this rostrum and that existing during a prolonged dry summer of searing heat and withering crops in South Dakota. In extreme desperation, a group of farmers called on a local minister to pray for rain. Obligingly, the man of the cloth offered up

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a very long and eloquent invocation. Sure enough that night a great storm rolled in from the southwest. Rain flooded the earth, eroding torrents of it, and, accompanying the sorely needed moisture, there came gale winds and murderous hail. The next morning, as one of the farmers who had sought the pastor's aid, stood looking ruefully at his ruined crops, he muttered: "Well, that's what comes of having our praying done by a fellow who doesn't know anything about farming!"

In any event, whatever the level of my knowledge of farming or of community development, I have served in an administrative capacity in a State or State Land-Grant University for nearly two decades. One could not have so long occupied such a role and not know something of the struggles within our institutions that have been related to this subject. There have been great debates simply seeking to define the field. Genuinely emotional struggles have related to who should have the authority or take the lead. There continue to be differences of opinion concerning the background training necessary for a person to be called a professional in community development. Even the popular federal label has varied from rural development to rural area development to community development to community service. Hopefully many of these questions either have been or are in the process of being resolved within the University family. The same is probably less true outside of

the University.

Let us begin by asking: What is community development? Without trying to give precise definition to the broad field, I should, in all fairness, reveal my vision of the meaning of the term.

One approach to establishing the parameters of the field is the process of exclusion. In the first instance it certainty does not include the private sector -- firms of all types, families and individuals, except insofar as they may interact with the public sector. It also excludes continuing educaton in its strictest sense for people in the public sector, such as, for example, non-credit courses for Prosecuting Attorneys or credit courses for school teachers.

Community development does, of course, involve the public sector, which for our purposes could be defined as including not only legally constituted government, with all of its appointed committees, but also institutions such as colleges, universities, and churches; non-public bodies, such as chambers of commerce and service clubs; citizens committees, and the growing number of semi-public groups such as governing boards of community action agencies, comprehensive health planning, and model cities. Fundamentally, I guess I would like to define community development as a public-group approach, dedicated to achieving the goals of the total body politic.

The laissez faire philosophy under which this country

developed dictates that government at all levels do as little as possible, leaving the initiative in the hands of the private sector. As a result, public-sector activities were initially largely limited to protection of life and property and to international affairs. Indeed, our country suffered its darkest hour some 110 years ago over this very issue.

Without really changing our laissez faire philosophy, a growing population, an expanding frontier, and a growing social consciousness have steadily expanded the role of the public sector. One of the first moves was in the field of transportation, with deep involvement by federal, state, and local governments in the improvement of both water and land transportation. The next heavy thrust came in elementary and secondary education. While maintaining earlier concerns, society turned to an insistence on broad protective measures such as anti-trust regulations, pure food and drug acts and, more recently, in pursuit of similar objectives, building codes, zoning, and pollution abatement measures. There were efforts closely related to people and their lives as government faced up to such items as the right of women to vote and prohibition.

The desperate thirties brought new measures dealing with welfare, employment, and economic development, though it was really only after World War II that local governments became actively involved in matters related to economic growth.

The Sixties saw the public sector moving into such fields as health, human rights, the elimination of poverty, and a host of other activities. It is not my intent to engage in comprehensive historical analysis. I simply want to clearly establish the fact that the daily lives of all of us are more and more influenced by the behavior of the public sector of our society.

If one reflects on matters important to oneself and his family, he cannot escape amazement, if not nervousness, at the number of things that are either totally or partially dependent upon the actions of the public sector as we have defined it. One can only predict that this trend will continue. This trend, I would assert, has been less by the design of any individuals or party, and more the inevitable reflection of an increasing density of population, a mounting dependence of our society upon technology and its demands for large scale of operations, and a growing social consciousness served by affluence.

Against this backdrop, what is the role of our public universities in the field of community development. We all share an abiding faith in the mission of these institutions, comparatively small in number, but nation builders in results. We, like other higher educational institutions, turn out young people with degrees--young people both skilled

vocationally and educated for citizenship. Our uniqueness as institutions relates to other dimensions. We have labeled them broadly public service. This is research and continuing education designed specifically to advance our respective states socially, economically, and culturally. Further, this effort is not a by-product of scholarly research and individual faculty interest. It is in itself a mission--a prime mission. Budgets are built to include all or part of the time of senior faculty members specifically to pursue this goal. The system includes outlying research facilities and extension field staffs which reach out to even ths most isolated citizen.

The Agricultural model of basic and applied research, demonstrations, continuing education, and just plain advocacy for better and more rewarding living through better understanding is sound. With refinements and modifications the same conceptual model is needed, and can effectively serve, ever widening horizons of our lives today. While defending vigorously the conceptual model, however, let us not pursue details, for undoubtedly if we were starting from count-down zero at this hour, we would make changes in our long-used agricultural design.

The state land-grant university must be active--not passive--in fulfilling its public service role.

It must be more than simply responsive to requests. It must be active in helping the population see problems beyond its present vision. It should be conducting programs which create awareness and that provide knowledge on problems that must soon be solved. It must establish new bridges and explore new frontiers. We must provide the reliable and accurate compass for adventurous sailors.

In short, the state land-grant university must be a viable resource to the people who support it. The faculty, libraries, computers, and laboratories are resources that cannot be duplicated in any of our states. They must be made available, not accidentally but purposefully, for the welfare of all. To be sure it is not our role to dictate to anyone or to act as a social conscience. We basically do have a rational society and in such a setting, knowledge--particularly when related to specific situations--has its own power. Our mission is not to determine the use of this power but to assure its availability in sufficient quality and quantity.

We have those among us on our campuses who would these days insist that we must use the university as a political instrument in societal decision making. This claim we must reject if the integrity of our centers of free inquiry and learning are to survive. Nonetheless, we surely can,

and must, provide our citizens with hard, useful and understandable knowledge and the educated ability to think about the significance of what they know. Does not the role of our institutions in the community development field clearly flow from these philosophical statements? Is it not through research and the dissemination of knowledge to assist the people, grouped in various public organizations and units, to make more rational decisions? This is exactly what we have attempted for decades to do with farmers, families, individuals, business firms, and even some governmental groups.

It is tempting to want to end this talk right here, but I know if I did that I would have only begged the question. Even though achieving our goal with the private sector has not been easy, the one that faces us in the public sector is immensely more difficult,. In moving up on this much less well charted and reef-strewn sea, I do have an especial sense of standing on the Brink of a Yawning "Credibility Gap" between the level of my perceptions and the elevation of my subject. In sober fact, the magnitude of my peril causes me to want to peer timorously out from behind this rostrum with a tentative query of: "Would you believe"?

Indeed, before I go much farther, you may find me guilty of the sins of a Texas woman who had undertaken to dye some old curtains blue, while she was hanging them on the line a little white lamb came gamboling by and fell into the vat.

He was fished out, unhurt, and went scurrying off.

A passing motorist saw the bright blue lamb, thought he'd discovered a new species, and offered a fancy price for it. The woman decided she had a pretty good thing going and the next day she dyed a second lamb. It, too, sold at a ridiculously high price. (I really don't know whether this is an animal science or home economics story!)

In any event, from this simple start, she developed quite a business, buying, dyeing, and selling lambs. In fact she became the biggest lamb dyer in Texas! Well, lamb dyer or no, you will believe me, I am sure, that finding the immaculately proper role for the university in the public arena of community development is a subject as sensitive as it is imperative. What then are a few of the ways and the perils of a university involvement?

One thing we might observe at the outset is that in the private sector the person responsible for making decisions is usually clear enough. Perhaps the family farm is the shining exception, albeit most Extension workers seem to have developed an unerring precision about determining in any given situation "Who wears the pants"! The decision-makers are not usually so clearly identifiable in the group-public sector. There is almost always a governing board or executive committee, and in many cases there is a division of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial. It is difficult to determine in such situations who has the responsibility to move or who is to blame for lack of movement.

Beyond that, in most geographic communities or problem areas a number of public bodies and organizations are properly concerned with a single problem. Not only is there confusion but often open hostility among groups and agencies. It would be hard to pick a less promising environment for securing change, and yet, as you so well know, this picture is more nearly typical than atypical. One does not have to be an expert in community development to see the need for determining who can and will make decisions, reducing the level of hostility, increasing cooperation, and perhaps building entirely new structures. We have made great headway in the social and behavioral sciences in recent years and hopefully we have some of the answers to politically fragmented and spastic circumstances.

In these swiftly passing days of confounding change and shifting need, there is, of course, abundant evidence to suggest that our states, for example, may be in serious circumstance born of basic obsolescence. With constitutions written to match the problems of other decades, if not centuries, with out-dated statutes on every subject, with entrenched and vested interests in Status Quo, if not regression, there are many who would agree with Senator Dirksen's observation that the day is close upon us when "The only people interested in state boundaries will be Rand McNally."

Clusters of crucial and fundamental problems revolve about the fact that the people have moved to urban, and then

to suburban, America. Metropolitan areas are knit tightly together by their unifying problems, but they agonize for want of the governmental cohesion to solve them. Greater Kansas City, to take one instance in my state -- and it is a simpler one than St. Louis -- is a breathing, ingesting, excreting, growing, functioning, single, living organism that lies at the bend of the Missouri River in two states, seven counties, and innumerable separate municipalities. There is no governmental entity that has either the coordinated interest or the developed capcity to give help but the Federal Government. And in such manner, and for very elemental reasons, do the people, now concentrated in metro areas, turn their attention and allegiance from the state and local forms of government to Washington. More decisions about Kansas City's future are now being made on the Potomac than on the Kaw and the Missouri.

If the state is to have a future, it must be clear that if nothing else, the University must help to find relevance and usefulness as a semidetached, objective agency that can make comprehensive analyses and serve as the legitimizer or catalyst for needed action.

A second opportunity and difficulty for a university in operating within the public sector relates to the decision making process itself. The process is conceptually the same in the public and private sectors. Basically it is listing goals; listing alternative means of achieving goals; selecting alternative; matching alternatives with resources;

selecting the best alternative; implementing the planned choice of action and re-evaluation. While there are real differences throughout the process, the real hang-up comes at the start, that is in goal determination. It is axiomatic that without a clear goal in view, any progress is an accident.

As Terry Sanford emphasized at a national municipal league conference some time ago, the states are "flying blind". ". . . Most states simply don't have the experience and resources for long-range thinking. .. Most states set out to the new world as Columbus did and take a chance on hitting an island somewhere---and they try it with antiquated navigational aids."I am reminded that it is "an insight as old as Senaca that if a man does not know to what port he is sailing, no wind is favorable."

Often unrealistic goals are encountered in the private sector, but the cold, impartial economic system soon brings agonizing reappraisal. Even though the same economic system works in communities, it tends to take much longer, and no individual is quite sure of the impact upon him as an individual. In the community, leaders even hesitate to advance a truly significant goal for fear of being labeled a liberal or conservative, or that the idea will be scoffed at and not accepted. All too often through the progress of debate and attrition the accepted goal will become the lowest common denominator of those possible. It is at

this stage of the process that the university can make its greatest contribution, not through naming goals, but through encouraging the group to keep its aspirations high and its commitment strong until it does achieve desirable goals,. Real sophistication and finesse are required to accomplish such results, without currying destructive animosities. Often a simple presentation of alternate goals can shift the heat of debate from a parochial to an enlightened point of view.

There are many ways in which a university can be persuasive in an appropriate manner,. One surely is to suggest and encourage wider citizen involvement in decision making. There could hardly be a more fundamental principle in human affairs. People tend to support the causes in which they have been involved, even when they end up on the opposite side of the question in the process of reaching a decision. Increased citizen participation in decision making not only helps insure a better immediate decision, but also better serves our philosophy of a democratic society.

One of the most difficult frustrations for the university comes when a community group decides to move forward in face of what appears to be solid university research which says that the objective is impossible or at the least, undesirable. In Agricultural Extension we have seldom hesitated to say that research dictated a right or a wrong course. Presumable we would feel equally free to

take the same approach in this arena, if only we were as confident of the validity of our research. Without meaning to cast reflection upon the research of the people in Community Development, it seems to me we are simply not at that stage today. Admittedly, we were probably wrong in taking such dogmatic attitudes in agriculture, because many of the stands which were taken certainly have been proven wrong. Let us assume, however, that we do feel confident of the research results. Then we have the very delicate problem of injecting the results into the already over-heated furnace.

Still another role of the university in the public sector relates to the implementation of the decisions reached in the process we have just been discussing. Surely it would be wrong for the university to vigorously pursue the implementation of the objectives reached by the public body, regardless of whether we thought they were right or wrong. We do have a contribution to make, however, and we can once again look back on our Agricultural Extension experience. The good County Agent never said: "You must do what you said you were going to do." Rather, he dropped by periodically and asked such questions as: "How is the project coming? Have you encountered any problems? Should we re-assess the goal we had in mind?" This approach is both appropriate and effective with community projects also.

There is yet a much broader objective, and one where the grounds are firm. This is leadership development. Rural

communities, and this is where the Land-Grant Universities have had their greatest impact, are desperately short of leadership. Our job is to train leadders, both for specific tasks and broad responsibilities. It is <u>also</u> to help devise ways of opening up avenues for people with leadership ability to find opportunities to use their training.

Surely I have made my feelings clear, namely that we of the Land-Grant family should be deeply involved in what we are broadly referring to as "Community Development." There are some obvious cautions, however, that we would forget at our peril.

If we are dealing with significant issues, we are always in a conflict situation. Even the seemingly simple matter of an improved or relocated highway involves conflict and controversy. All too often the anger of an aggrieved minority can win out over what might be to the clear advantage of an apathetic majority. When one moves on to more complicated but significant matters such as the consolidation of governmental units, the abandonment of a function for a particular governmental unit, or sweeping new powers for a particular governmental agency, a whole community is likely to be immediately embroiled in bitter conflict.

Actually our Extension Services may well have tended to stay too far from conflict situations, although I can vividly remember one heated occasion when a Dean of my acquaintance was charged by a distraught board member at his

institution as being the controversial figure who had succeeded in putting the "stench" in Extension! One can understand the many reasons for such a posture. After all, the President and the Board are irritated by complaints. At the same time, the possibility of criticism is no reason for staying away from an issue.

The important point is the position we take. We should never be either a protagonist or an antagonist on a particular issue. Our role should be stating the facts as we know them, admitting they could be in error and encouraging the appropriate people to make a decision. Basically this is, of course, the public affairs approach, even as it has been well described in Cooperative Extension literature. In any event, while the university must be most circumspect about not becoming an agency for direct community action, we must also be careful that we do not stand back too far from the firing line if we are to significantly influence the tide of battle.

Obviously the university must never take an authoritarian role. We never have <u>the</u> answer, and this applies even to agriculture, and certainly to families and youth. We may well have information which no one else possesses and that can help the decision-making unit improve its lot. But we must always stay with the <u>educational</u> process.

As I said at the outset, we must recognize that many others than ourserves are working in the field of Community Development. It is impossible to have terms such as

"Community Resource Development," "Community Action," and "Community Problem Solving" on the front pages of our major newspapers without having many individuals and agencies interested and involved. National Government, State Government, Local Government, private firms, and private citizens are variously and widely active. This being true, the university must never claim ownership of the field. It should strive to help each of the groups find its own desirable role. The university must be willing to work simultaneously with all groups, and once again experience in the fields of agriculture and government prove that this can be done.

In conclusion, permit me a suggestion or two: In the very first instance, the field of Community Development is obviously important to society and as such, the State Land-Grant University, if it be true to its destiny, cannot fail to involve itself in the proper manner. This clearly means that there is no time for inhouse fighting, The job is too demanding to lose energy that way, and success is too important to be placed in jeopardy that way!

A major phrase today is"delivery system," The Land-Grant University is noted for its delivery system to rural people. I submit that we must have a delivery system to communities, both in rural and urban areas. We must have research results and through field staff these must be carried to the people where they are. Many key persons in Public decision-making will not leave their neighborhoods,

In the process of developing an effective delivery system, we must increaingly look to the use of other colleges and universities, perhaps particularly the community colleges, We must make increasing use of all electronic means by which we can reach more people more economically.

Quite as clearly, we must emphasize an inter-disciplinary approach,. Neither the socialogists, nor economists, nor political scientists, nor attorneys, nor engineers, nor any academic breed by whatever sign has all of the answers, The community is as broad as life itself, indeed, broader than our most comprehensive universities. This says in unmistakable language that we must find our ways of harnessing not only our own <u>total</u> university resources, but even broadening them through functioning ties with other institutions.

We must also take into account the mood of our times,. For almost two decades it has become increasingly clear that it is the policy of the Federal Government to bolster the responsibility of state and local government. This reenforces the State Land-Grant University, which is both a statewide and a local institution. This is an opportunity which, if lost, may not be recovered.

One is tempted to seek these many complex objectives by some simplistic organizational pattern. Letus remember that organization is only a tool to accomplish a job. Almost any organizational pattern will work given the indispensable presence of such ingredients as an understanding

of purpose, a dedication of the Staff to that purpose, adequate and competent personnel, and a sufficient resolve on the part of administration and Board.

Above everything, let us remember that our basic faith and way of life is, at beginning and end, now and always, founded in the educational process. Surely the future of the state is tied more intimately to its universities than ever before. The state has no hope-- no future -- if it does not tend the education of its people to the absolute limits of their individual abilities. The frontiers of today and tomorrow are the frontiers of the mind, and the mind, delicate, confounding, terrifying instrument of potential that it is --- the mind is our first university business.